

CANNABINOID CHRONICLES



Volume #4
Issue #10
July/August 2007

Medical Cannabis News and Information

Canada - Health Canada Questions Doctor's Dosage

Health Canada, in all its wisdom, thinks that it knows better than people who are trained as physicians. Perhaps that is why they are contacting doctors who prescribe medical cannabis for Health Canada-approved patients and advising them to keep dosages low. Some legal users say that not only violates doctor-patient confidentiality, it's also wrong for bureaucrats to make judgments about the medical needs of people they've never seen.

"A person's medication should be between him and his doctor," said Tony Adams, 60, a medical marijuana user in Victoria. Adams, a licensed user who's been smoking 7 grams of cannabis daily, recently applied to Health Canada to increase the dose to 10 grams, with his doctor's authorization. Official approval from Ottawa is needed so that Adam can legally grow the appropriate number of cannabis plants, set by Health Canada at 5 plants for each daily gram.

But a program official in Ottawa challenged Adams' doctor in a telephone call, saying most patients need no more than 5 grams. Adams, who has severe arthritis and degenerative disc disease, later received a new licence for just 5 grams a day.

Similarly, Alison Myrden in Burlington, Ont., says her doctor was challenged by Health Canada about her 20- to 28-gram daily dose.

"They asked to lower it more than once, and my doctor and I both refused," said Myrden, 43, who uses marijuana for multiple sclerosis and another painful condition. Her message to Health Canada: "Back off - leave our doctors alone."

The department's recent campaign to keep doses to five grams or less includes postings on its website referring to external surveys and studies indicating most (most is not everyone) medical users need only one to three grams daily, "whether it is taken orally, or inhaled or a combination of both." And a fact sheet mailed to doctors warns that "an elevated daily dosage of more than five grams may increase risks with respect to the effect on cardiovascular, pulmonary and immune systems and psychomotor performance, as well as potential drug dependency."

A spokesman for the department said dosage decisions are always left up to doctors(?). If so, then why did Tony Adams daily allowance get reduced without his physician's approval?

Source: Times & Transcript (Moncton), 18 Jun 2007,
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n732/a03.html

Canada - Renda Pleads Guilty To Postal Mischief

A medical cannabis advocate accused of mailing cannabis to fellow users in the US and Britain pleaded guilty June 6 to committing mischief by using Canada Post services "without proper authority." Following Marco Renda's plea, federal prosecutor David Doney asked the court to withdraw three counts each of trafficking and exporting a controlled substance and a single count of possession of a controlled substance.

Justice Walter Gonet gave Renda, 47, formerly of the Mount Forest area, a conditional discharge and put the man on probation for two years. Outside court, Renda's lawyer, Leora Shemesh, said the plea was carefully crafted to protect her client's Health Canada licence, which allows Renda to possess and grow cannabis. He uses it to alleviate the symptoms of hepatitis C.

Shemesh said if Renda had pleaded guilty to any drug-related counts it could have cost him his federal exemption from marijuana laws.

"The court was compassionate with that and so was the Crown," Shemesh said, noting the plea to mischief was hammered out between the judge and lawyers for both sides during a series of pretrial meetings. "His honour was aware of not wanting to affect his licence," Shemesh said. "It was a compassionate resolution."

Renda was accused of mailing 43 packages of cannabis to people in the US and Britain during March 2005. In entering his plea yesterday, Renda admitted only that he used the postal service to send out "plant materials." Shemesh said as well as the compassionate reasons to conclude the case, the Crown might have had difficulty proving its case because of "continuity issues" surrounding Canada Post's handling of the packages, including who had authority to open them.

Source: Guelph Mercury, Jun 7 2007,
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n699/a01.html

CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE CONTINUES

The constitutional challenge that the VICS are presenting continues once again on July 31 to August 3, and once more from August 7 to August 10, all at the downtown Victoria courthouse. Please come out and show your support.

Peace and Thanks

The Vancouver Island Compassion Society (VICS) Newsletter
mail: #130 - 2017A Cadboro Bay Rd., Victoria BC V8R 5G4

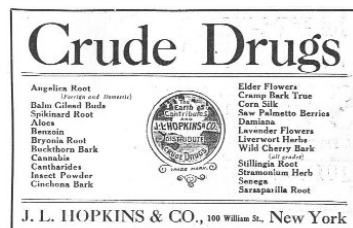
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South wall Wildfire Bakery photo by Ed

Science: Ointment with THC reduces allergic skin reactions in mice

According to animal studies by researchers of the University of Bonn (Germany) the topical administration of THC in an ointment is able to reduce allergic skin reactions. Their research was published in the journal Science on 8 June. Endocannabinoids were shown to play an important role in regulating inflammation processes. Increased endocannabinoid levels reduced inflammatory reactions in the skin of mice, which were made allergic against a certain allergen, while the absence of cannabinoid receptors increased these reactions.



When inflammation occurs the endocannabinoids act like someone stepping on the brakes. They prevent the body from doing too much of a good thing and the immune reaction from getting out of control. This is consistent with the fact that at the beginning of the infection

the endocannabinoid concentration increased in the mice. If the skin was treated with a THC solution shortly before and after applying the allergen, a lot less swelling occurred than normal. Ointment like this would probably not have an intoxicating effect. More at:

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070607171120.htm
 Source: Press release of the University of Bonn of 7 June 2007, Science Daily of 7 June 2007

Science: Schizophrenia

Earlier research by scientists of the University of Cologne had demonstrated that levels of anandamide were elevated in the cerebrospinal fluid of untreated people with schizophrenia. The new research shows that untreated patients with newly diagnosed schizophrenia who used cannabis had no elevated levels of this endocannabinoid.

Source: Leweke FM, et al. Schizophr Res 2007 Jun 11

Science: Damage of the cerebellum

In a mouse model of cerebellar dysfunction resulting in disturbed motor function THC was shown to be beneficial. The administration of THC reduced deficits in motor coordination, equilibrium and muscular tone. Researchers concluded that cannabinoids "could represent a new field of investigation concerning the treatment of cerebellar ataxic syndrome in humans."

Source: Lorivel T, Hilber P. Behav Brain Res 2007 Apr 24

Science: Vomiting

Toxins of a certain bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) cause vomiting, which can be combatted by activation of the CB1 receptor, Japanese researchers demonstrated in animal studies. Toxins of this bacteria are the major cause of food poisoning in humans throughout the world. Both antagonism at the 5-HT3 serotonin receptor and activation of the CB1 receptor by cannabinoids were effective in reducing the symptoms.

Source: Hu DL, et al. Cell Microbiol 2007 May 21

Science: Inflammation of the airways

Research with cells of the human bronchial mucous membrane shows that a synthetic cannabinoid (CP55,940) reduced the concentration of certain molecules (cytokines) that promote inflammation. The scientists of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, concluded that cannabinoids exert anti-inflammatory properties in airways by modulating cytokine release.

Source: Gkoumassi E, Br J Pharmacol 2007 Jun 11

Science: Epilepsy

In animal studies it was demonstrated that increased levels of anandamide protect from seizures caused by a nerve poison. Anandamide is an endocannabinoid that binds to both CB1 and CB2 receptors.

Source: Karanian DA, et al. J Pharmacol Exp Ther. 2007 Jun 1

Science: THC improves appetite and reverses weight loss in AIDS patients

Researchers at the Orlando Immunology Center in Florida investigated the long-term effects of THC (dronabinol) on 117 patients with HIV/AIDS, who lost weight. Subjects who received dronabinol for 3 to 12 months were included in a retrospective analysis. THC was shown to improve appetite and weight and to reduce nausea. 63% of patients maintained or gained weight. In subjects receiving THC for 1 year, the mean weight gain was about 1700 grams. The percentage of patients experiencing loss of appetite decreased significantly from 71% to 26% at 1 month after start of the therapy and continued to decline throughout the trial. The percentage of patients experiencing nausea (38%) decreased consistently from week 2 on.

Source: Dejesus E, Rodwick BM, Bowers D, Cohen CJ, Pearce D. Use of dronabinol improves appetite and reverses weight loss in HIV/AIDS-infected patients. J Int Assoc Physicians AIDS Care 2007;6(2):95-100.

Italy: THC and nabilone may be prescribed

With a decree by Health Minister Livia Turco, which was published on 28 April 2007, THC (dronabinol) and the THC derivative nabilone were allowed for medical use. The decree does not need the adoption by the parliament, which make the two substances legal for medical use at once.

Source: Associazione per la Cannabis Terapeutica (ACT) of 2 May 2007

Kick Them While They Are Down

Grant Krieger, an MS sufferer and legally permitted user of cannabis for medical purposes, was convicted in March on two counts of trafficking after police seized two packages of cannabis sent through his Grant Krieger Compassion Club to Manitoba for distribution to people with similar afflictions.

Calgary Provincial Court Judge William Pepler delayed Krieger's four-month prison sentence so corrections officials could find a way to allow him his legally permitted medicine in prison. Seemingly they couldn't. Two physicians balked at signing the required Health Canada MMAR paperwork (even though their signatures would merely rubber-stamp what's already legal) and nobody from any level of government came forward. So off to jail he went, without his medicine.

When he was last sent to jail under similar circumstances in 2001, Krieger was freed after his condition worsened to such a state, even corrections bureaucrats and drug warriors were embarrassed. "He walked into the prison and in four or five days he was in a wheelchair," said fellow activist Keith Fagin.

Sure enough, several days after his second visit to jail, Krieger's followers reported he'd deteriorated to the point of being taken to the Remand Centre's hospital. To treat a citizen in this manner is depraved to say the least; to deny a seriously ill person their medicine in this day and age amounts to torture. (in Canada you say?) Fagin says Krieger could easily be supplied cannabis butter infused with THC. But if doctors are too fearful to uphold the law and provincial authorities can't be bothered to intervene, it's moot. However, a ray of sanity has shone on the proceedings and Krieger has been released after serving nine days. His lawyer succeeded in getting him bail until an appeal of his most recent conviction is heard, likely no earlier than October.

Source: Calgary Sun, The, Jun 22 and Jun 28, 2007.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n743/a03.html and.../drugnews/v07/n765/a09.html

VICS AGM: July 15th, 12 to 3 pm, 755 Pandora St.

Authoritarian School Over-Asserts Control

What would you think if a high school student challenged an illicit drug education program with facts and rational argument, just because he/she wanted to find the truth? That he/she must be a drug user? That he/she is condoning illegal activities? Hmm...

A recent incident at a public school in Canada has kicked free speech and freedom of expression in the teeth. And they have given kids another reason to doubt, no, disbelieve what adults tell them. Way to go administrators - lament our future generations.

Kieran King, a 15-year-old Grade 10 student in Wawota, Sask., (pop. 600), thought the presentation on the dangers of drug use lacked credibility, so he did some research on the relative health risks of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. When he told some of his fellow students that cannabis seemed the least hazardous of the three, he set in motion a series of events that led to a school lockdown after he organized a walkout in support of free speech, a threat assessment involving the RCMP, a school suspension and failing grades on his exams(!).
thanks to WPD for their timely visit

The perception is that Mr. King was promoting drug use simply by talking and asking about drugs (?), and in a manner that upset the status quo. Does this mean that talking about war means you are promoting violence? Or that speaking about racism means you are racist? Whatever happened to free speech and thought? For an 'enlightened' country such as Canada (well, maybe not), this is not only embarrassing but disheartening as well.

This incident boils down to maintaining control. One group of society will not permit another group the opportunity to express itself in an open and non-violent manner, and conduct a free and lively debate on contentious issues. Wawota forgot its pedagogical purpose; it acted the way a tyranny acts when challenged.

Why do we continue to patronize and insult our children (and future decision-makers) by squashing the right to express one self and discuss issues rationally and logically?

While Kieran King was threatened with receiving a zero grade for each exam he missed during his suspension, withering criticism has forced re-evaluation of the situation and the school will award him a cumulative average of his marks throughout the school year. This may allow him to keep his honour roll status. Best of luck, Kieran - we need more students like you.

[See also a recent story of free speech mangling in an American public school in Juneau, Alaska, the infamous "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" fiasco at:

DrugSense FOCUS Alert #348, www.mapinc.org/alert/0348.html
Source: StarPhoenix, The, Jun 30 2007.
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n773/a05.html

New Mexico To Allow Cannabis Growing

New Mexico, US, recently approved a bill that would allow patients to use cannabis for medical purposes. Set to go into effect July 1, the Health Department would create a secure production and distribution system - the first state to do so. Now, in a surprise move, the Health Department unveiled a provision that allows patients to grow a limited number of marijuana plants with protection from state prosecution.

Because of a potential conflict between state and federal law (the federal government still views cannabis as an illicit drug that has no medicinal properties), the Health Department is seeking advice from the Attorney General's Office for the best way to carry out that aspect of the new law. Source: New Mexican, The, Jun 29 2007
www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n770/a05.html

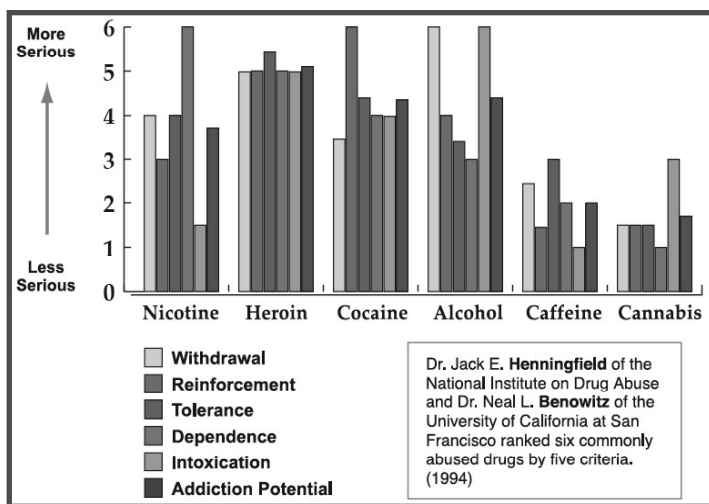
Find us online at <http://www.thevics.com>

Nicotine Compared to Other Drugs

It's an older study from August 1994 comparing nicotine to other drugs and it would be more useful if there were some recent studies to compare to. Nevertheless, it provides some insight into some of the more commonly used drugs.

"The New York Times reports that 45% of cocaine users said that the urge to smoke cigarettes is as strong or stronger than that to use cocaine (Philip J. Hilt, "Is Nicotine Addictive? Depends on Whose Criteria You Use," August 2, 1994, C3). Among heroin addicts, 38% used the urge to smoke as strong or stronger than that to use heroin. Among those addicted to alcohol, 50% said the urge to smoke is at least as strong as the urge to drink.

Dr. Jack E. Henningfield of the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Dr. Neal L. Benowitz of the University of California at San Francisco ranked six commonly abused drugs by five criteria."



In the above graph, 1 is the lowest capacity to cause the effect, and 6 is the highest capacity. The study is based upon the criteria below:

Withdrawal - Presence and severity of characteristic withdrawal symptoms.

Reinforcement - Substance's ability, in human and animal tests, to get users to take it repeatedly, and instead of other substances.

Tolerance - Amount of substance needed to satisfy increasing cravings, and level of plateau that is eventually reached.

Dependence - Difficulty in ending use of substance, relapse rate, percentage of people who become addicted, addicts self-reporting of degree of need for substance, and continued use in face of evidence that it causes harm.

Intoxication -- Level of intoxication associated with addiction, personal and social damage that substance causes.

<http://www.ndsn.org/AUGUST94/NICOTINE.html>

DEFINITIONS

diatribe *n.* piece of bitter criticism; invective, denunciation [French, from Latin from Greek *diatribe* spending of time, discourse, from *DIA*(*tribo* rub)]

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 7th ed., 1983)

lugubrious *a.* doleful, dismal, mournful; hence lugubriously *adv.*, lugubriously *NESS n.* [from Latin *lugubris* (*lugere* mourn) + *OUS*] (*ibid.*)

raconteur *n.* (*feminine* raconteuse) teller of anecdotes (*good, skilful, etc., raconteur*). [French (*raconter* relate, RECOUNT)] (*ibid.*)

soporific *a. & n.* (drug) tending to produce sleep; so soporiferous *a.* [from Latin *sopor* sleep + *i* + *FIC*] (*ibid.*)

Health Canada Still Unclear On Mega Mark Up

Health Canada (HC) still hasn't made it clear why the medical-grade (they say) cannabis that they pay \$0.33 per gram for is then sold to ill Canadians for \$5.00 per gram, a 1500% mark up.

Mr. Wilcox, a terminally ill medical cannabis user living in Victoria, owes the federal government more than \$6,400 for cannabis he purchased through Health Canada's medical marijuana program last winter. But like many who subscribe to the federal program, Mr. Wilcox is neither able nor willing to pay for his government-grown medicine. Not only is the product low in quality and high in price, it should be covered by the health-care system like any other drug, he said.



"I'm living out my years and I'm not going to pay a cent for any of this. I truly believe this medicine should be provided for free," said Mr. Wilcox, who lives in subsidized housing in the city's James Bay neighbourhood.

He's not alone. It's estimated that 227 of 538 registered users (42%) who order their marijuana from the government have been cut off for failing to pay for the product. About 4% of those accounts have been turned over to collection agencies. HC provided updated figures this month indicating that the total debt for registered users now exceeds \$300,000.

"It's the combination of sending collection agencies after people who are critically ill for pot that's already been marked up 1,500 per cent that's so ridiculous," said Philippe Lucas, founder of the Vancouver Island Compassion Society.

HC spokesperson Renee Bergeron said the feds made it clear from the start that it will not provide patients with free cannabis.

Ms. Bergeron said recent news reports looked only at the bulk purchase price and ignored additional costs such as testing and distribution. They can't release details about the program's costs due to the privacy requirements of its contract with Prairie Plant Systems, the company that grows cannabis under contract to the government.

However, Ms. Bergeron said the price charged to medical marijuana users "does not fully recover the costs associated with the production and distribution" of the cannabis.

Doing the math, Health Canada is saying that the extra \$140 per 30 grams (a fat ounce) of the total \$150 per ounce price (+GST) goes to additional costs such as 'testing and distribution', and still it isn't enough to cover costs(?).

The federal licence Mr. Wilcox was granted three years ago

permits him to possess and use up to 10 grams of marijuana a day. When his marijuana crop failed last fall, Mr. Wilcox started ordering cannabis from the government. Over a four-month period starting last December, HC sent him 1,200 grams of cannabis via courier. The final shipment arrived in March, with a letter informing him that his supply had been cut off and his account may be turned over to a collection agency.

At \$5 a gram, the government cannabis costs about half as much as high-end medicine grown by local compassion clubs. Mr. Wilcox, who supports himself and a seven-year-old daughter on disability benefits of less than \$1,000 a month, admits he had no intention of paying for the product.

"When you have a choice between keeping your meds down at any cost, even if it means having a bad credit rating, I figure it comes down to survival of the fittest," he said. "If that makes me a criminal, so be it."

Source: Globe and Mail, July 3 2007.
<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v07/n787/a03.html>

CMPA Medical Cannabis Liability Waiver Form

Grant Krieger spent nine days in prison without his legally permitted cannabis because he was unable to get a physician's signature to obtain the Health Canada license, the requirement to be met before he could consume cannabis in jail. Didn't anyone bother to tell his physicians or lawyer(s) that there is a liability waiver form for such a purpose, developed by the legal arm of the Canadian Medical Association for the MMAR pro-gram? It might have helped. It also limits liability *outside* the Health Canada program.

Visit the Canadian Medical Protective Association website at <http://www.cmpa-acpm.ca> and look under 'Forms'. Follow the links to the downloadable file in .pdf format.



RESOURCE DIRECTORY:

AIDS Vancouver Island

1601 Blanshard, 384-2366

V.P.W.A.

330-1105 Pandora, 382-7927

MS Society

1004 N.Park, 388-6496

HepC BC

306-620 View, 595-3892

Canadians for Safe Access

<http://www.safeaccess.ca>

Disabled Rights Alliance

15-950 Humboldt St.

Victoria, BC V8V 2Z8

380-6660

John W. Conroy, Q.C.

1-877-852-5110 (toll free)

<http://www.johnconroy.com>

BCCCS

Vancouver, 604-875-0448

<http://thecompassionclub.org>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org>

Action Committee of People with Disabilities

383-4105

Canadian Cannabis Coalition

www.cannabiscoalition.ca

Canada Medical Marijuana

www.medicalmarijuana.ca

Media Awareness Project

<http://www.mapinc.org>

Drug Policy Alliance

<http://www.drugpolicy.org>

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/index_e.html

1-866-337-7705

Norml Canada

<http://www.normlcanada.org>

Cannabis Health

www.cannabishealth.com

ICRS

<http://cannabinoidsociety.org>

CannabisLinks.ca

"Why is marijuana against the law? It grows naturally upon our planet. Doesn't the idea of making nature against the law seem to you a bit... unnatural? You know what I mean? It's nature.

How do you make nature against the fucking law?"

- Bill Hicks, comedian, 1961 - 1994